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3. *Expedition up the Si-kiang River.* By Lieut. LINDESAY BRINE,
R.N., F.R.G.S.

I HAVE the honour to forward to you the following account of the expedition up the Si-kiang, or Western River (generally called the Broadway), undertaken for the purpose of surveying that river and finding how far it was navigable, and also to accustom the Chinese to our presence, and compel them to receive us and open their gates in those cities hitherto unvisited by Europeans.

Our force consisted of seven gunboats, and the boats of H.M.S. *Cambrian*, *Assistance*, *Adventure*, and *Fury*, under the command of Captain McCleverty, R.N., and nine hundred troops, chiefly marines, under General Straubenzee. Mr. Parkes, the consul, accompanied us as interpreter. The French were represented by a small paddle-steamer and a company of seamen under Captain d'Abouville. Lord Elgin had intended accompanying the expedition, but, at the last day, changed his mind, and started for Cochin China, the scene of the French operations. The troops were embarked in large shallow draught-chops, towed by the gunboats, and on Wednesday, Feb. 16th, the expedition left Canton, picking up the boats of the ships at Whampoa en route: I proceeded with our boats to the *Staunch* gunboat. We entered the network of channels connecting the two rivers immediately below the second bar, about 15 miles above Boca Tigris, but did not reach the Western River until the afternoon of Saturday, 19th, on account of the delays occasioned by taking a wrong passage, by gunboats grounding on the spits and knolls, and by the necessity of always anchoring before night. Surveys of the channel were taken under the direction of Lieutenant Bullock, of H.M.S. *Actæon*.* A partial survey had been previously taken of this passage, and also of the Western River, as far as San-shui, by Commodore Elliot in 1857. The actual length of the passage is about 35 miles, with a depth of water averaging at low water 10 to 15 feet (rise and fall 8 feet); the breadth rarely less than 80 yards. The country to the south is flat and uninteresting, being chiefly devoted to the growth of rice and bamboos, the banks as usual being lined with banana-trees. On the opposite bank it is hilly, and there are three or four towns of considerable importance, two of them walled. Near one of these—Shan-tuk—I saw the mulberry in cultivation. We entered the Western River at about 50 miles from its mouth, and proceeded at our best speed, always anchoring at night. By eleven on Sunday morning we were abreast of San-shui, 40 miles west of Canton, the highest point reached by Commodore Elliot. Up to this the river was a clear, broad stream, with sufficient depth of water at all times for vessels of 15 feet draught. On its right bank ran a long range of brown, pine-skirted hills, of heights varying from 400 to 800 feet. The country on the left bank was chiefly flat, with occasional hillocks. The land was in good cultivation, but there was little activity on the river. The principal growth was the sugarcane and bamboo, several sugar-mills being at work on both sides. The whole country, both in grandeur and culture, was far superior to what I had yet seen or heard of in China. The river-banks, composed of sand and gravel, were large and sloping, and in many places cultivated in plots down to the water-level. Numbers of trees lined them, mostly of the banyan tribe. One class of trees, low and broad-crowned, is very common, and bears a most glorious sombre-green foliage. Abreast of the San-shui was a dismantled stone battery, capable of mounting eighteen guns. Above this the river trends in a westerly direction, several considerable villages lining its banks, the country on both sides being hilly; the range on the right bank gradually becoming mountainous, the river narrowing to 400 or 500 yards. Twenty-five miles above

* See Publications of Hydrographic Office. China, No. 5.

San-shui the river cuts its way right through the range, creating a magnificent pass or gorge some three miles in length, the bare and rocky faces of the hills on either side running perpendicularly down to the water. The breadth of the pass must be three-quarters of a mile, but appears much less. We found no bottom with the hand-lead at 18 fathoms. The opening of the pass is very similar to that of Balaclava harbour, but on a grander scale. Small Buddhist temples are erected at both openings, and a small three-storied pagoda commands the pass at its upper end. The hills were of the usual character in this (the Kwang-tung) province, viz., sandstone lying on granite. Issuing from the pass, on our way upwards, the river considerably broadened, opening into a fertile and well-cultivated hilly country, the surrounding hills crowned with seven and nine-storied pagodas. At 6:30 P.M., on Sunday, we anchored off the walled city Shan-king, or, as it is called in the provincial dialect, Shoo-king, the ancient capital of the Kwang-tung province. The point we had now reached was 30 miles above San-shui, and 80 from where we had entered, in all 130 from the mouth, supposing the part near Macao to be so called, the river still preserving its depth and altering but slightly in breadth, the water beautifully clear and pure. On Monday forenoon the mandarins came off to call upon our authorities and welcome us to the town. They complained very much of the misery brought on the people and the surrounding country by the attacks and depredations of the rebels, who were scattered around in all directions. The mandarins were received with their proper salute, three guns. In the afternoon the whole force landed, and marched through the city and a few miles into the country, returning in the evening. On Tuesday morning the General, Captain McCleverty, and three light-draught gunboats, proceeded higher up the river, leaving the troops, &c., behind at Shan-king. Here we remained until their return on Saturday afternoon. The troops and naval brigade daily marched out into the country 4 or 5 miles, in different directions, taking their provisions with them, coming back to their vessels before night. Shan-king presents the appearance of once having been a city of considerable importance and power, now sinking into decay. Several of the old mandarin residences or yamuns, once noble buildings, are now falling to ruins, and the resort of beggars. The pagodas are all very ancient, and crumbling away. There are few signs of trade. The only signs of anything being done beyond what is necessary for their own use, are in the manufactures of fans and marble ornaments. There are the usual vegetables, ducks, pigs, &c. Bullocks from a little distance out, supply our market in the Canton River. The city walls are rather more than 2 miles in circuit, built of the usual blue clay brick, based upon granite; their height is about 20 feet. Here and there are a few embrasures, but only one gun is mounted, and that one of our old 32's. The garrison consists of two thousand men, who take their guards at the different gates for the purpose of repelling any chance incursions from the rebels. They are miserably armed, with gingalls and bows and arrows of the worst description. The roads are better kept and broader than in most parts of China, although even here they frequently are barely wide enough for one person. At the back of Shan-king there is a very remarkable group of limestone rocks, thrown up perpendicularly from the level to a height of 300 to 400 feet. Buddhist priests have built or hewn themselves cells all over the faces of the rocks, reaching them by steps cut out from the solid marble. Their temples are at the base, one of them containing some very valuable and curious bronze josses. In the largest of these rocks is a very extraordinary cave, running right through the mass, in one place forming for itself a species of dome nearly 100 feet in height, with beautiful pending stalactites. The priests were proud of their cave, and delighted in showing us all its peculiarities, echoes, &c. I happened to have a hammer at hand, with which I detached some pieces of the rock. The marble varies from a pure white, somewhat similar to the Pentelican, to a grey-blue, sometimes veined with red. That there is a great deal of marble about is evident, from the

fact that all the sides and bases of the temples, and the principal portions of the yamuns, are composed of it; the sacred vessels in the temples also, that elsewhere are usually iron or bronze, are here all marble. The hills and surrounding country are composed of granite, quartz, and sandstone, the soil bearing that peculiar reddish hue, caused by iron and decomposed granite, so common to the islands of the African coast and in the Eastern Archipelago. Rice and sugar-cane were in cultivation, and the papaw, lychee, and peach-trees in blossom. The river at Shan-king is almost free from the influence of tides, they having at times just sufficient power to counteract the down current, and cause slack water. From the appearance of the banks I should say that the river during the rains must rise over 6 feet. The river's bed is of sand and gravel, and somewhat rocky. On Saturday, 26th, the surveying expedition came back. Lieutenant Bullock informed me that they were enabled, with some trouble, to reach the first class walled city Wu-chou, situated on the left bank, 76 miles above Shan-king. At this point they had only 5 feet water.

Extract from Hydrographic Notice; China, No. 5.

"*Shao-king to Wu-chau-fu.*—On the 22nd February the *Watchful, Janus, and Woodcock* started for Wu-chau. There the river winds through a continuously hilly country of sandstone and granite, chiefly in northerly and westerly directions. The hills, varying from 100 to 1500 feet in height, are in general densely wooded, and many highly cultivated. Near Shao-king limestone hills appear in rugged and picturesque groups; one crops out on the river of a most picturesque form, and is called by the Chinese Kai-yik-kwan, or the Cock's Comb, which it strongly resembles. A group also lies 2 miles north of Shao-king, to which they give the name of the Seven Stars, after the beautiful constellation of the Great Bear.

"At 50 miles above Shao-king, and on the left or north shore of the river, a single mass of granite (in the form of a thumb) rises perpendicularly some 300 feet out of a range of hills of 1500 to 1800 feet elevation. Its local name is Kum-kwoh-shek, but it is also called Fa-piu, or the flowery tablet, and it is the most remarkable object in the river. After passing this, the navigation becomes dangerous, and the river-bed studded with rocks.

"The district city Wu-chau or Ng-chau is 75 miles above Shao-king. Its latitude by observation is 23° 28' N. (22 miles north of Canton), and its longitude, approximately, 112° 14' E. The breadth of the river here is about three cables between the sandbanks, and nearly a mile from shore to shore, but it is with difficulty navigable by junks higher up at this season; the first rapids being (by report) about 12 miles above Wu-chau.

"Wu-chau-fu stands at the confluence of the stream on which is Kwei-ling, the capital of Kwang-si. This communication was open, though the intermediate country was in the hands of the rebels. It had the appearance, observed from the heights, of being easily navigable by gunboats."

Wu-chou is one of the most considerable cities in the Kwang-si province, and in peaceable times carries on a great trade. On the right bank, 30 miles above us, was the walled city Tih-king. The bed of the river all the way became more and more rocky and difficult to navigate, knolls here and there jutting out with few feet water on them. But they found that there was a good, safe passage for vessels of the class of H.M.S. *Furious*, not drawing over 15 feet, as high as Tih-king. Above this the river became only fit for handy, light-draught steamers. One hundred and eighty miles up there are rapids. Its trend as far as Wu-chou was nearly due west, slightly northing. From Shan-king up the hills became better wooded, and near Wu-chou were well clothed with trees. Timber was a principal article of trade. More limestone rocks were seen; those in the river were a sort of sandstone. At Wu-chou they were in daily expectation of an attack from the rebels, and had a force of over 6000 men within the walls.

On Sunday, the 27th, we weighed and proceeded back, calling at San-shui, Shan-tuk, and Sha-wan on our way, reaching Whampoa on the 3rd March. San-shui is situated on a broad creek running out from the Western River, and connecting that city with Fatshan and Canton: the passage is shallow, and barely navigable for gunboats. Shan-tuk, or Ty-loong, is situated about half-way between the Western and Canton rivers, on the passage by which we entered. It stands about 4 miles back from the water, at the rear of some low hills.

We expected to find some difficulty in entering the city, for it had always held warlike pretensions, and was well walled and garrisoned. However, we marched in on Tuesday forenoon, and were well received. We halted in the principal yamun, where the mandarins had prepared a good tiffin à la Chinoise for the officers, as well as tea and large quantities of oranges for the troops. This city, within the walls, was over 2 miles in circumference, and densely populated. The suburbs were of still greater extent. A creek, with sufficient water for pinnaces, ran through the heart of these suburbs, and was spanned with two well-built granite bridges of three and five arches. There were many good shops, and several handsome yamuns. Shan-tuk presented a good contrast to those cities we had previously visited, from its greater cleanliness and activity. Here, too, I saw double walls running through the town, for the purpose of arresting the progress of fire. The city walls averaged 25 feet in height, with no embrasures: their thickness at the base, including facing and earth-work, was not less than 20 feet. After the interview with the mandarins, our proclamations announcing our peaceable intentions, &c. &c. were posted about the town, and we returned to the ships, our salute to the mandarins at Shan-king being returned here. The city Sha-wan is thickly populated, as all other Chinese towns, but is not of much importance. It was near Shan-tuk that I saw the mulberry in cultivation, but I did not see any silk manufactories in the town.

The result of this expedition must be highly gratifying to all who are anxious for the extension of trade and of geographical knowledge. It has shown the entire navigable length of a very noble river, and accustomed the Western Chinese to our friendly presence, also to our power. Now that China is daily becoming more open to our enterprise, there is every reason to believe that this river will be of great importance to us, opening, as it does, such a communication with the Western provinces. At present the only trade appears to be timber, sugar, and bamboo, the latter supplying the paper manufactories near Canton; but this want of activity can well be accounted for by the harassing presence of the rebels, who, by seizing the crops and detaining the junks, throw a blight over the whole face of the country. This conflict between the Celestials and Imperialists promises to be of so long a duration, and probably eventually to the detriment of the present dynasty, that it is impossible to hope, for very many years, for any alleviation to this distress. From the appearance of the men in the cities and villages we visited, I should argue a more general freedom from disease than is met with elsewhere. Diseases of the skin are not so common, and the standard of stature is higher. This, I suppose, is partly due to the purity of the water, and to the fact of there being less ground used for rice-fields. From Tih-king to the river's mouth, a distance of nearly 160 miles, the deep-water passage is almost entirely on the left bank. That part of the river below Shan-king is called by the Chinese Shan-kiang, or mountain river.

P.S.—A hurried survey of the river's mouth was taken by the expedition in 1857, and they reported that on the bar near Macao there was not more than 13 feet at high water. If this be correct, the best entrance will be from the Canton River by the passage we took.